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Visions of the Good: International Politics and the Struggle for Justice

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Chapter One: Introduction

On the evening of the 6th of April, 1994, the jet carrying Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down. Within hours the Rwandan Presidential Guard, parts of the military, and extremist Hutu militias had set up blockades and began rounding up and killing those in the Government – mostly ethnic Tutsis – who supported a UN backed peace process that had ended a three year civil war. The next morning the newly elevated head of state, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, was captured by the marauding military and militia forces. She was forced to watch her husband and children executed on the lawn of a United Nations Development Programme compound before being killed herself. The second-in-command of the United States Embassy could do nothing but listen to the cheers of the assassins from a nearby compound.¹ Ten Belgian Peacekeepers who had been sent to protect Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana were rounded up, executed in cold blood, and their bodies mutilated. Over the next three months nearly a million people were hacked to death with machetes, shot as they fled from machine guns, and entire families were slaughtered as they huddled together in what became the largest genocide since the Holocaust.² The world did nothing but watch with bewildered dispassion.

The United States – having recently suffered nearly a hundred casualties while participating in a UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia – actively sought to prevent UN intervention. The White House failed to hold even a single staff meeting about the atrocities as a fifth of the Rwandan population was exterminated over the course of just

¹ *PBS Frontline*, “Ghosts of Rwanda” Interview with Joyce Leader

² *The Atlantic*, “Bystanders to Genocide” by Samantha Power

three months. In 1998, four years later, President Clinton stopped by the Rwandan capital of Kigali to apologize for the inaction of the international community during the genocide.³ He would later repent further, saying “we just blew it. I blew it. I just, I feel *terrible* about it.”⁴

President Clinton has consistently referred to the failure to intervene in Rwanda as the worst foreign policy mistake of his Administration.⁵ However, this was not a failure of technical or military policy; no numbers were crunched incorrectly, no helicopters crashed, and no Americans lost their lives or even mistakenly took the lives of others. Nor was it a failure of the structure of government or lines of communication. Non-intervention in Rwanda was a moral failing and President Clinton was ashamed at letting down the character of the United States of America.

This character of nations and the social order that it creates is the subject of this thesis. Each and every nation has ideas of what constitutes legitimate and appropriate action in certain situations – its *vision of the good*. Since the genocide in Rwanda, the United States, NATO, “the West” in general, and many others have become more committed to preventing civilian massacres in what has become known as the “responsibility to protect.” However, China claims that state sovereignty cannot be trumped by any responsibility to protect in cases of mass atrocity.⁶ The “rise of China” is not to be feared because China is evil. It is not. What causes concern is the collision of competing definitions of justice and its effect on the international social order. Every nation frames political responses in terms of rights, responsibilities, and appropriateness.

³ The Miller Center, “Remarks to the People of Rwanda (March 25th, 1998).

⁴ *The New Yorker*, “The Wanderer”, by David Remnick.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *New York Times*, “China and Others Reject Pleas that U.N. Intervene in Civil Wars”, by Barbara Cossette

Each country believes itself to be in the right. These conflicting definitions of justice are at the heart of the central question of this thesis: what gives rise to different understandings of what is just and what role do these normative perceptions play in international politics? Subsequent chapters will explain the origin of these visions of the good and describe their impact on international politics. This thesis will reveal how material force and perceptions of legitimacy interact across domestic society and the international community to define international politics as a struggle for justice in pursuit of differing visions of the good.

The concept of visions of the good is intricately linked with the definition of the state as a social actor. No matter the government type, the size of the country, or the predominant religions, all states operate on normative principles known as the state's identity. Identity incorporates the values a state pursues using whatever resources it possesses. However, even the seemingly most steadfast states do not decide on their guiding principles at the level of government. Each and every state is co-constitutional with both domestic society and the international community. That is to say, it is impossible to encapsulate an understanding of the state without reference to its domestic population, who operate as the agents of the state, and the structure of the international system found in the international community. Through the causal mechanisms of legitimacy and physical domination, the state is forged in the nexus between agent and structure. Unique from other formulations of the body politic is the revelation that states seek not power through war, but to shape the peace so that it conforms to their notion of justice and legitimacy – their vision of the good.

This thesis does not seek to identify grand transhistorical patterns, but merely aims to identify heretofore unknown linkages which guide international politics.

Knowledge of these forces will not only enhance our capacity to explain past events and our ability to predict trends into the near future, but it will establish a framework for thinking and speaking about how the world *should* be ordered.⁷

No explicit paradigm is adopted for this work, but international relations theorists will find concepts and terminologies from Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism within these pages. Each paradigm has important revelations as to the fundamental workings of the world; it is important to recognize and make the most of these truths. Inspiration is also taken from the British School for its willingness to engage with the interplay between domination and society and from post-structuralism for its more nuanced, if incomplete, understanding of power.

While centered on international relations theory, the motivations for and purposes of this argument run much deeper. A wider and troubling social trend towards individualism and materialism denies the very existence of many of the social phenomenon described within these pages. The very idea of morality and goodness is defined out of the public discourse, limiting the domain of discussion. This blindness prevents fundamental differences from being productively addressed

The second chapter delves more deeply into the concept of visions of the good, clarifying key terms such as justice, legitimacy, and identity. The third chapter describes how the state is created by individuals in a process of reification based on common understandings of how the world should be. Chapter four shows how this domestic

⁷ For example, this thesis is not concerned with the question of why states trade, but asks why states create the rules of trade that they do. This then allows for questions about which set of rules governing trade is best or most just.

construction of the state is tempered by the views of the international community and how the forces of legitimacy and physical domination jointly decide which vision of the good the state expresses. The process by which visions of the good change is detailed in the fifth chapter. The sixth and final chapter concludes with an analysis of why theoretically deep understandings of the social life are necessary for productive theory-building and how this informs our ability to reason about how the world should be ordered.

Chapter Two: Justice

“America was established not to create wealth but to realize a vision, to realize an ideal - to discover and maintain liberty among men.”

– President Woodrow Wilson

Each and every social unit – people, communities, states, and the community of states – has an internally consistent understanding about the way things *should* be. These perceptions of appropriateness define the social order that these groups help to create. By no means will the set of appropriate behaviors envisaged by one group be at all the same as another’s understanding. We have already seen how China’s vision of an immutable sovereignty is different from, say, the United States’ more limited view of the right of sovereignty. Nor is there any guarantee that these views are consistent across time. Interactions with others and the very practice of life can change these perceptions, much as the failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide later came to be recognized as an injustice.

This chapter aims to create a deeper understanding of these normative beliefs and to show that they are the main driver behind the creation of social order. Through the force of legitimacy, social actors construct their understandings of justice, which, taken together as a vision of the good, define the identity which drives the actor and influences international politics.

I. The Meaning of Justice

When political philosophers speak of justice, they often adopt some sort of universal ordering principle such as “the greatest good for the greatest number” in

utilitarianism or Locke's ideas on natural rights. The principles that these decision rules result in is a *conception of justice*. Robert B. Talisse defines a conception of justice as

“the collection of principles by which society distributes rights, social goods, duties, and responsibilities. Every social group, insofar as it exhibits any stable scheme of cohesion and cooperation at all, will realize some conception of justice; that is, every assembly of persons which can properly be called a “social group” will exhibit implicit principles of organization which determine the roles, rules and responsibilities of the individuals of which it is comprised.”⁸

The systematic organization and application of these principles is the job of *theories of justice*. Both the society's conception and theory of justice is aimed at regulating certain social functions – excluding neither material interactions such as trade nor purely ideational functions such as positions of status. In John Rawls' terms, justice is then “the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation.”⁹

In terms of states, these “social institutions” are much more loose and informal than any national court system. Nonetheless, states do share a social structure. The widely held idea that rich countries should provide foreign aid is one example of this social order. This is encapsulated in a more strictly institutionalized form through the World

⁸ *On Rawls* by Robert Talisse on page 19

⁹ *The Theory of Justice* by John Rawls on page 6. The use of Rawls here is merely an example of one possible way in which the milieu of justice can be understood. This thesis does not intend to adopt any Rawlsian framework.

Bank and its efforts to encourage international development. Even the means by which the World Bank operates is a form of justice as the rules it sets influence who benefits. Other examples would include multilateral treaties such as the Basel Accords which regulate banking or the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Justice in the international arena, then, is concerned with the rules and expectations which govern the behavior of states, including, to adapt Rawls' definition of justice, their rights, duties, and methods of fair interaction.

Ideas of international justice are not limited to states or their governments. In the end, it is individuals who conduct international business and suffer or prosper based on which set of rules are established. It is families who suffer when mothers and fathers are killed in a war to defend allies against unjust attack. It is communities who band together behind a common interest to lobby their government – or even other governments or international institutions – for the promotion and implementation of human rights. The international order effects everyone at every level of society and, thus, everyone has, at the very least, some form of intrinsic feelings about whether they are being treated properly by this system of justice

II. Perceptions of Legitimacy

At the most fundamental level, people's judgments about what is fair is based on legitimacy: the perception of what *ought* to be. Actions which are unjust are illegitimate and ought not to be. Later chapters will go into more detail on the process by which

legitimacy is formed and functions in the world, but for now it is only necessary to recognize its existence and form.

Legitimacy is not just applied to outcomes; it is also a property that can be granted to social institutions. When courts issue decisions, these orders are respected and obeyed (in an ideal world at least) because the courts have been given authority by the people. Individuals recognize that the court itself should exist and that it should issue judgments along a certain form. Because the individual has granted that the court *should* be, the individual has ceded some of his or her ability to decide on what those judgments should be, exactly. The individual accepts these inconsistencies because the court is seen as possessing some intrinsic authority over such matters. In addition, the President has been granted the legitimate authority to pardon offenses. These cases indicate that, in practice, justice will not always be what a collection of individuals think on a single issue. Rather, the outcome will be influenced both by perceptions of justice and by intervening institutions. Both of these are functions of legitimacy. While it may seem contradictory that a legitimate authority could issue what appear to be illegitimate rulings yet maintain its legitimacy, this problem is simply the recognition that we operate in a complex world where no theory of justice can be applied perfectly. This indicates that it is primarily perceptions of legitimacy which drive the application of justice.

In the international system, this duality of legitimacy is present in the workings of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). No other body is widely recognized as being able to authorize warfare, yet the UNSC has not always acted justly in its dictates – failure to intervene in Rwanda and other nations being such examples. States as well as institutions can have or lack legitimacy. During the Cold War the United States and the

Soviet Union were seen as the moral leaders of their respective blocks. They may not always act justly according to even the views of their allies, yet they still retained a huge stature. Individuals can also be objects which are granted legitimacy – think Pope John Paul II in 1979 Poland or Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi. Beyond institutions and individuals, however, even ideas can be seen as legitimate or not – even outside of the effect which they have. If one thinks that the norm against the use of nuclear weapons is a good thing, the very norm can be granted intrinsic legitimacy above and beyond any legitimacy derived from preventing possible unjust destruction.

III. A Vision of the Good

It is important to recognize that perceptions of justice are imperfectly applied and that legitimacy also matters. A vision of the good, then, is an actor’s set of perceptions concerning the structure of legitimacy. This takes into account both the theories of justice that are seen as proper in addition to which institutions are seen as having independent authority. The central claim that international politics is a struggle for justice must be tempered by the fact that this quest for justice is seen through the lens of legitimacy. Both the institutions and the theories of justice matter.

Each actor has its own vision of the good which may differ in subtle or substantial ways from others. The differences between different visions are arbitrated in the realm of politics, or, occasionally, through politics by other means.¹⁰ Differences lead to questions over how much to rely on the authority of certain institutions and over which principles to promote in international politics. The process by which these debates are settled at any

¹⁰ “Politics by other means” is a popular Clausewitz quote which constitutes a partial definition of war.

one point in time are described over the course of the next two chapters, but the evidence for the existence of these disagreements is clear. The United States did not feel that it required the authorization of the United Nations to go to war in Iraq in 2003, yet other nations put greater legitimacy in the decision-making process of the UN and widely criticized the US for this failure.

Perceptions of legitimacy are what drives states' construction of the international social order. By responding to perceived injustices and acting consistently with their own moral reasonings, state actions conform to the limitations of their normative assertions about what *ought* to be. Most of international politics is found in settling the differences between various visions of the good. Questions of appropriate economic policy come into play; worries are expressed about when conflict is permissible; and the merits of certain types of development aid are debated.

IV. Identity

These conflicting perceptions of justice come together, as described in later chapters, to form the social order. When a state disagrees with the present system of justice and institutions and has the capability to change them, it will do so. States seek to maximize the influence and expression of their vision of the good through the most efficient means available. Wherever order is a concern, the vision of the good a state adopts is that state's identity. The state will rationally pursue the ends found within its identity. These ends could follow the logic of consequences (do whatever is necessary to achieve a just goal) or it could follow the logic of appropriateness (justice is not

independent from the means used to achieve it) depending on how the state understands its theory of justice.

State identity is defined by a vision of the good, which is a set of perceptions of legitimacy. Legitimacy is the belief that a principle of justice or a social institutions *ought* to be. Identity, therefore, is the set of normative claims or beliefs about the way things should be. State identity is not necessarily based on the ways things are now, but rather on one vision of what should be.

But when we say that a state has an identity which expresses its vision of the good, what exactly do we mean by the state? The next chapter will address the issue of specifying where the normative perceptions for state identity arise and the process for determining which vision of the good is expressed.

Chapter Three:

Agency and the Domestic Construction of the State

“L'état, c'est moi.”

– Louis XIV

In International Relations, state-level analysis has long received criticism for ignoring the importance of human agency in affecting the actions of the state in International Politics.¹¹ This “micro” critique seeks an explanation as to how it is that nations have interests and make decisions, rather than presupposing an anthropomorphized state. By introducing a more precise understanding of what the state is – and where agency comes from – this chapter will show how states can be productively and legitimately viewed as actors endowed with interests in an international system.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first will review how other authors have addressed the relationship between people and the state. The second will describe how the socially created individual is the source of agency, while the third section describes how these individuals create imagined communities like the state. The fourth section will discuss the role and idea of legitimacy in limiting the state and the fifth will address limitations arising from physical domination.

¹¹ See, for example, Alastair Iain Johnston’s chapter entitled “The Social Effects of International Institutions on Domestic (Foreign Policy) Actors” (p149) in *Locating the Proper Authorities: The Interaction of Domestic and International Institutions* edited by Daniel W. Drezner (2003) where he says that sociological approaches allow or even demand that the unit of analysis be the individual or small group. This was also a major criticism of Wendt’s *Social Theory of International Politics* in *Wendt’s World* by Steve Smith (2000). Many post-positivists in Constructivism reject the importance of having any sort of causal claims at all; see *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis* by Milja Kurki (2008) on page 130.

I. The Self

In order for states to have visions of the good, the state must be an actor endowed with normative principles. The state must literally be understood as an entity which is capable of having and acting upon beliefs about what ought to be. However, we traditionally attribute those characteristics to individuals alone. This section will demonstrate how agency is built up from the individual to the state.

If we are to begin with the individual as the source of all agency, as is traditionally assumed, then it becomes necessary to define what the individual is. A basic and agreed upon claim is the physical features of a human being. Everyone has a heart, blood, bones and muscle systems which permit physical interaction with the world. However, even basic forms of animals contain these exact same kinds of features. It is in the experience of consciousness, free will, and abstract reasoning that agency arises and humans become differentiated from other animals. It is in this mental sphere where the state, if it is to have agency, must arise.

Despite each individual combination of mind and body being physically separated, however, no individual would claim to be constituted of his or her own physical matter alone. Rather, the self arises in one's social relations as a mother, a father, a hunter, a warrior, a teacher, a student, or even as an American. Even if one was stranded on a deserted island, one would define him or herself by the absence of others – as an outcast, a survivor, or one in need of assistance. These all things which give the self

reason to exist, a purpose or *telos* to pursue – the self is not prior to its ends.¹² That is to say, each individual is constituted in part by his or her social relationships with others. In this view, the self *is* only in relation to others.¹³ Social relationships create meaning and seeking to fulfill these relationships is what makes us us. Agency originates from the self, which exists in social relations with others, rather than as “atomistic” individuals who only interact in the physical world.

II. Reification of Imagined Communities

In early hunter-gatherer and tribal societies, it is easy to see how groups of people who physically interacted on a daily basis defined themselves as part of this group and their social relations within it. However, modern groups consist of much larger numbers of people, none of whom have met all the others, yet who all define themselves as part of a whole. These “imagined” groups can best be understood as communities: constitutive relationships which help define a part of the self as the in-group. Even conceiving of oneself as part of this group leads individuals to internalize the “values, norms, and accepted patterns of behavior” if they were not already in place.¹⁴ In this sense, the communities that people form – from the family to the nation – help to create the person, just as the person helps to constitute the community. Not all participation in groups and communities has a large effect. If the individual does not internalize the norms and values of the community for whatever reason, then they remain unattached.

¹² A point made by Kymlicka against liberal Kantian individualism in Chapter 6 of *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (1990, p200).

¹³ See Charles Taylor on page 111 in *Liberal and Communitarians* edited by Mulhall and Swift (1992).

¹⁴ *Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations* by William Bloom, page 26.

The seminal book on these larger groups is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. The most immediate example of an imagined community is that of the nation-state. Anderson defines the nation as a limited, sovereign, community.¹⁵ The nation is limited in that it sees itself as discontinuous with other nations – boundaries divide it from others. Sovereignty is understood as the authority over all internal affairs, while a community here means a deep, horizontal comradeship. Anderson arrives at this definition through analyzing the shared experience created by the rise of print media, which allowed people in disparate locations to share an experience and ideas without ever meeting or even purposefully communicating.

It is through these means that the state is created. Through common understandings and perceptions of the way justice should be created through both legitimate institutions and conceptions of justice, these imagined communities reify the state. Reification is the creation of an entity through shared beliefs. The term “state” is here referring to the general idea that the state is a set of institutions aimed at regulating the rules of society as the final arbiter of justice. Because this group of sovereign people believe that they should be and are a state, they act upon their shared perceptions, creating the state in the first place.¹⁶ Because people are co-constitutional with their social communities, agency is shared with the state as people operate with shared normative expectations.¹⁷ The state is not a visible, singular entity. It can, however, be detected in many ways: troop formations, border checks, national flags, political rallies,

¹⁵ Page seven.

¹⁶ It may also take a physical revolution to acquire the means to *act* as this state, but the idea that there *should* be a state is and must be prior to any material action to create it.

¹⁷ It is the judge who issues court orders, police who enforce the shared ideas of law, and citizens who follow these laws either because they agree that they are good laws or they think that others will enforce them. None of these *are* the state, but simply evidence that there is a shared idea of the state.

and capitol buildings, to name a few. In other words, state agency is seen in the effects of the state. None of these are the state itself, but merely evidence of the existence of the state.

III. Legitimacy

However, this existence is predicated on the state having legitimacy in the eyes of those who reify it. Legitimacy is the belief that an entity ought to be. The state is granted the authority to pursue a prescribed ends, purpose, or *telos*. In this case of the state existing through reification, a removal of legitimacy would be the death of the state. Police wouldn't enforce rules; court orders would have no effect. The presence of legitimacy helps to ensure law abiding behavior, whereas the absence of legitimacy leaves little social order. Indeed, the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia during the Arab Spring are consistent with the partial loss of the government's legitimacy.

The bounds of legitimacy limit state activity. In Egypt, soldiers refused to enforce harsh sanctions on protesters, limiting how the Mubarak regime could respond. These actions were considered unjust and outside of the bounds of acceptability. It's not just the material constraints of an unresponsive military that matter though. For the most part, leaders are aware of the social limitations of their actions. More generally, people in government come from the same communities that reify the state and so the bounds of legitimacy are not pushed against as both domestic society and the government have common perceptions of justice.

However, even in democracies where leaders are publicly chosen, the pattern of legitimacy matters. Every individual is not created with the same ability to influence the society's perception of justice. Certain people are endowed with positions of social prestige, such as priests or celebrities, which enable them to have an oversized impact on the bounds of legitimacy. Every state has a different social structure, so this is taken as an exogenous variable outside of the domain of this study. What matters is that a social consciousness which regulates perceptions of legitimacy exists and has an impact on the state and that legitimacy is not simply a function of physical power.

The literature on the topic of legitimacy has a wide scope and a pervasive tendency towards ill-defined concepts.¹⁸ Many case study analyses assume a flexible definition which allows them to place the blame on any state failures as a loss of legitimacy and explain the success of others as enforcing their legitimacy through the use of force. In effect, legitimacy is simply the handmaiden of power in the understanding of the state. This section will show the fallacy of this approach, examine other possibilities, and propose a more nuanced and productive theoretical understanding of legitimacy.

In *Politics as a Vocation*, Max Weber describes three types of legitimation of domination. These are mirrored by Anthony Giddens in *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* and so will be addressed together here, with Giddens' descriptions appearing first. (1) The first is "Traditional": the sanctity of that which is old. This is called the appeal to "eternal yesterday" by Weber. Giddens divides this into gerontocracy where the source of

¹⁸ As explained below, this is painfully obvious in the writings of Alexander Wendt who defines the state based on the usual definition of "a monopoly on the legitimate use of force." However, he also defines the constitution of the state in such a way that the domestic population must always and necessarily view the state and its actions as legitimate. The use of legitimacy in this definition of the state is superfluous, leaving the state as simply "the monopoly on the use of force" – an intellectually weak and *prima facie* dubious claim.

legitimacy is found in village elders, patriarchalism where the source is the head of the house, and patrimonialism where the source is an administrative staff. Patrimonialism is often a lingering effect of (2) “Charismatic” Legitimacy where an almost superhuman and often revolutionary force validates certain actions. This is often transitory and based on this one person, so the establishment of an administration to carry on this legacy can take the form of patrimonialism. Weber identifies this as the “gift of grace” by those who are pursuing a calling to a cause and identifies it as the source of creativity in the evolution of rule. In *The Sociology of Charismatic Authority* Weber explains that this type is intermittently unstable due to its opposition to order and lack of initial bureaucratization. The third type of legitimacy is (3) “Legal.” These are impersonal norms consciously established through traditional or charismatic legitimacy and exist separately from offices and the holders of those duties. Weber is more specific and sees it as the trust in the competency of these rules. These three types form the basis for most understandings of legitimacy in contemporary philosophy and sociology.

Weber also discusses the function and origin of legitimacy on an individual level. He says that obedience is found through a combination of hope and fear and implies that these three aforementioned types of legitimacy are simply rationalizations of that domination through carrots and sticks. In Weber’s definition: “the probability that a command with a specific given content will be obeyed by a given group of persons”. While domination and legitimacy may both compel people to follow certain norms or pursue specified ends, they are very different effects. Under a system of domination an individual may follow the state’s policies out of a self interest of avoiding punishment or gaining material prosperity. He or she may do this without rationalizing their reason for

doing so. Indeed, if they did internalize this reasoning, there would be less of a need for the use of force. On the other hand, someone may pursue an action that goes against state because they believe that this action is good and legitimate – a charismatic leader who lacks a monopoly on power may still provide direction for appropriate means and ends to pursue.

When this understanding of legitimacy is applied to the definition of the state as seen in Weber's *Politics as a Vocation* and adopted at least in part by most future state theorists including Wendt in *Social Theory of International Politics*, this definition of legitimacy can become circular. The state as a "monopoly on the legitimate use of force" implies that a monopoly on force is not sufficient to have a state – legitimacy is also required. But if legitimacy is simply the rationalization of domination, then every single monopoly of force should be able to create legitimacy. The term is therefore theoretically weak as it does not apply in all but the most unusual of circumstances in which those with a monopoly on the use of force are unable to appeal to tradition, charisma, or a legal order – an unlikely event given that some sort of appeal to these is necessary to gain power in the first place. It becomes unnecessary to use the term "legitimate" if force is sufficient for legitimacy. While it may indeed be the case that sufficient force can, over time, help to create legitimacy, it cannot be assumed to be the same thing.¹⁹ This causality problem is clearly evident in Wendt's ignorance of legitimacy despite its inclusion in his definition of the state.

If states are to be anything other than societies of physical violence – both Wendt and I would argue that they are – then a redefinition of legitimacy is necessary. The first

¹⁹ Material power is fungible. Not only can it be used to suppress protests with police and soldiers, but resources can be put towards reeducation initiatives or public spectacles glorifying the regime's vision of the good as a means of transforming material power into legitimacy.

step is to realize that it is a mistake to link legitimacy with power or force. Citizens of authoritarian states can be compelled to obey the laws through the use of force and the extension of incentives – in effect, influencing the material structure of domestic life – yet still not perceive the state as (1) the extension of the “eternal yesterday,” (2) the superhuman source of truth, or (3) as a source of competent laws. Many within the administration may see a despot or authoritarian regime in this light, but society at large – those governed under the monopoly of force – may not perceive the state as legitimate but simply as an existing structure that must be worked around.

This shows that legitimacy and domination are not necessarily linked. Domination –defined as the use or threat of use of overwhelming organized violence – is a material effect while legitimacy is an ideational perception. While these perceptions may originate from appeals to tradition, charisma, and legal order, they do not necessarily conform to material incentives. To ignore this dichotomy is to ignore an important effect in determining state actions.

In *Legitimation of International Governance: A Discourse Approach*, Jens Steffek recognizes this division and critiques current literature which assumes that legitimacy arises from the form of governance – usually democratic structures. Instead, he shows that it forms through communicative discourse based not on power or agency, but on goals, the scope, and procedures of the object or norm being established. In other words, legitimacy arises from common perceptions of justice. In the case of the state described at the beginning of this section, these common perceptions of justice are needed for the state to be reified as a legitimate entity.

IV. Physical Domination

There is no requirement that a government have legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Rule by force can create compliance even in the absence of goodwill. By separating legitimacy from force, a more nuanced view of what the state is can be constructed.

Physical force can be used to make others, against their will, comply with a set definition of justice. Dictatorships are the classic example of domination without legitimacy. A small group of people can rule over a much larger population through maintaining a monopoly on the use of violence. So long as a ruler can call upon sufficient police forces, perceptions of legitimacy from the general population do not matter. Justice becomes understood simply as what the ruling coalition believes. Oftentimes, however, the cost of maintaining an illegitimate government is too high to sustain for forever. The dictator has two choices: govern more in line with what the public believes the state should do and thereby gain some legitimacy, or change what the people believe the state should do to align more with what the dictator believes.

Over time, a government with an absolute monopoly on the use of force can use these resources to educate or socialize a new generation of citizens to accept a different system of justice. Public holidays, government run newspapers, and other social mediums can be utilized to create a new shared experience that leads to greater public buy-in to the state and allows for lower expenditures on the maintenance of force. This can be seen in

North Korea where state run news services organize elaborate public displays of affection for the government.

If the state lacks legitimacy and loses its grasp on force, then social organization ceases to exist. Society will reorganize itself into the lowest common denominator of force and legitimacy. This can be seen in the recent history of Somalia where the collapse of state legitimacy and physical domination led to the proliferation of warlords (who rule largely by force) and the creation of Somaliland which declared its desire for independence from Somalia. Somaliland had undergone a different experience of history from the rest of Somaliland as a British colony which had only recently united with greater Somaliland – in 1960, about 31 years prior to the failure of the Somali state. This different experience likely resulted in a stronger regional identity which allowed for the creation of a smaller state when Somalia collapsed. Disorder cannot long last as people in the state of nature will soon find some means of social cooperation or be dominated by another's system of order.²⁰

If the state does have legitimacy, however, then no amount of force over the domestic population is needed. By and large, citizens of the United States do not need a constant police presence to act in accordance with the laws and system of justice because they believe that these things are just and ought to be anyway. Legitimacy is not guaranteed nor limited to democracies. China also has legitimacy stemming from its domestic population. The state will continue to exist regardless of whether the People's Liberation Army has the physical ability to defeat any mass protest as the people believe that what the government does is just. The commonly recognized rise of Chinese

²⁰ That is to say, Hobbes' Leviathan will be created *de nova* (a new legitimate order) or imposed from an outside force for its own interest (domination).

nationalism is evidence of the fact of this popular belief that the Communist Party ought to exist.

These combinations of legitimacy and physical domination can be expressed in a 2x2 matrix. The system of justice that is expressed by the state can be deduced from the combination of the presence of legitimacy and physical domination. These are not clear cut categories and legitimacy is not all or nothing, as has been shown, but this is a useful mechanism for thinking about what goes into creating the state.

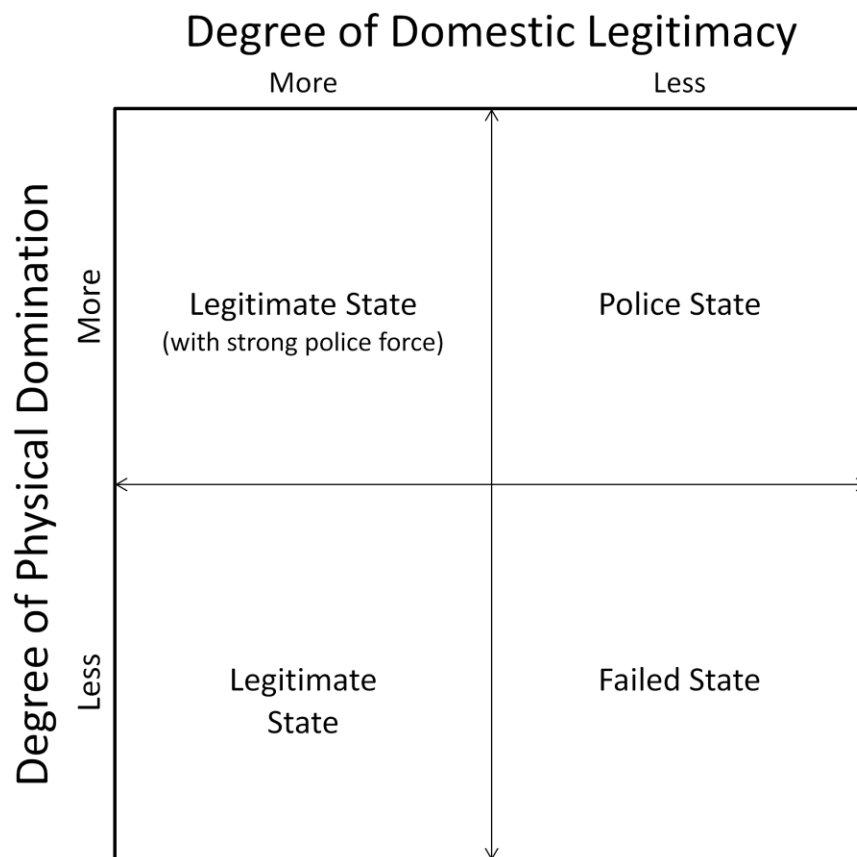


Table 1

Beginning in the top right, police states have a large degree of physical domination but lack domestic legitimacy. In the most extreme cases, the people would

have no influence whatsoever on the vision of the good that the state expresses. The only input would come from those who control the strings of the means to physical power. However, when moving along the x-axis closer toward the center, the rise in legitimacy means that the state would not need to devote as many resources to keeping the population in line. Moving down along the y-axis, the loss in the ability to repress or buy off the population results in some degree of necessary capitulation to the will of the people. The ruling regime no longer has the physical power to force compliance with their own vision of the good and therefore must compromise in order to gain a larger degree of domestic legitimacy and cooperation.

The bottom right quadrant indicates the absence of any vision of the good. Failed states are unable to express their identity because they have dissolved into the lowest common denominator – the only place where physical power and legitimacy do exist in sufficient quantity to sustain order. This collapse was seen in the failed Somali state that resulted in the fracture of the domestic community into numerous semi-autonomous states and rule by warlords in many other areas.

States in the left hand column – regardless of their ability to dominate the population – have sufficient legitimacy to exist independent of force. Sufficient numbers of people have sufficient agreement with the state's vision of the good to think that the state *should* exist. If the domestic population agrees that the law of the land is just and want to follow said law, then no extreme measures of enforcement are necessary. The people's vision of the good is being expressed. The key difference between the bottom left and top left quadrants is that, should the people's perceptions of justice change from those of the regime, those formerly legitimate states with large police forces will continue

to reflect the character of the regime rather than the people's new perceptions, while states with insufficient police forces must change or be changed in a process which could plunge the country into the realm of a failed state.

This chapter has shown that, as social creatures, human agency becomes embedded in the community when there are common conceptions of the good. The state is one form of community where the authority for justice is placed. The expression of these values depends upon the combination of legitimacy and physical domination found within each state. However, external forces can also shape the value expression of the state.

Chapter Four: Structure and the International Construction of the State

Without an enemy, there can be no war.
– Tagline to *Joyeux Noël* (2005)

When a swimmer enters a pool, he or she has nearly complete freedom of movement; doing laps, diving down and touching the bottom, or tossing a ball. If that same swimmer is placed into a river with raging rapids, the ability of that swimmer to decide his or her own destiny is diminished. The environment becomes more important than any choices the swimmer makes, rendering him or her as a patient in need of rescue rather than as a self-sufficient swimmer.

Understanding the environment and the constraints that states act within is vital for understanding the state itself. Just as legitimacy and physical domination played a role in the domestic construction of the state, these same two ideational and material forces impact the state from above. International society shapes states through determining and enforcing appropriate behavior in international politics.

I. International Society to International Community

Throughout history, civilizations have existed in a state of constant communication. Trade made the ancient Phoenicians and enabled colonies across the Mediterranean basin. The Greeks exported their ideas through great cultural displays and the conquests of Alexander and the Bactrians. Rome imported large quantities of eastern goods along the Silk Road, facilitating international communication and cultural exchanges. Diverse Hindu traditions on the Indian subcontinent were shared from one

kingdom to another. Islam spread across the vast Sahara Desert on the back of the salt and gold trade. The Crusades resulted in various treaties and agreements concerning the status of and access to Jerusalem. Germanic princes debated the role of the Holy Roman Empire and religion in their kingdoms. The British Empire established democratic conventions on every continent.

These interactions did more than simply generate material wealth or impose one culture on another. Indeed, oftentimes the causation went in reverse: the national food of Britain is popularly considered chicken tikka masala – originating from India. The spread of traditions and the creation of customs of appropriate behavior between states were constantly and everywhere reexamined, renegotiated, and changed. Medieval notions of chivalry dictated the behavior of kings in war. The Pope was granted the authority to divide the New World between Spain and Portugal. These norms of proper etiquette were the building blocks of international society. However, the universality of these ideas was hindered by the physical limits on the application of force and the expense of communication.

Globalization has changed that. From the telegraph to phones, satellites, and fiber-optics, communication is now instant and the cost: negligent. Ships larger than skyscrapers move through canals which cut between continents, enabling massive amounts of universal trade. The ability to project force has also expanded. At the dawn of the first millennia it would have been unimaginable for the two great powers – the Roman Empire and Han China – to even wage a proxy war, much less threaten one another's very existence. The adoption of gunpowder based weapons, advances in nautical travel, and the transportation innovations of the Industrial Revolution greatly

increased the destructive power of armies. Since the advent of bombers, nuclear weapons, and inter-continental ballistic weapons, the potential for destruction has become universal.

No longer is the creation of norms of behavior relegated to a few states in a constrained geographic area. Communication, trade, and the forces of destruction have become ubiquitous and inescapable. Whereas two nations may not have had the need or ability to communicate in the past, it now takes substantial effort to eliminate any interaction. This exponential increase in interaction between states has led to the development of certain accepted patterns of behavior that covers all states, not just a few. Globalization has led international politics from operating in a common International System to operating within an International Community where there are certain shared values and norms – just like in domestic communities. Likewise, the International Community uses the same two mechanisms to define the state: legitimacy and physical domination. As such, the extent to which the International Community participates in the creation and constitution of the state is purely a modern phenomenon.²¹ The extent to which other nations are involved in the affairs of individual states has never been greater. The involvement by the international community in defining the state is not a necessary condition, however. States existed well before globalization led to greater interactions

²¹ Regional involvement in defining the state has always existed. The Roman Empire helped to establish and influence the Kingdom of Armenia, among many others, as a buffer state from eastern enemies. The spheres of influence utilized by the Concert of Europe would also constitute a form of constructing the state. What differs now is the extent to which all nations are involved and the ability to communicate and extend force across great distances – well beyond immediate borders or particular outposts. There is a limitation to this model, however. Threats of nuclear war, for example, cannot force a state into compliance on trade policy. The sheer lack of proportionality in such a threat would be taken as a joke, rendering it ineffective. With ICBMs out of the picture, state's ability to apply force universally decreases. Marines storming a well defended state does not have the same ability to compel compliance and is much harder to implement due to the still large expense of transporting massive armies (the stopping power of water). While the past six decades have certainly resulted in a more globalized world and enabled the transformation of international society into an international community, this structure is not completely salient at all times and places.

between states. However, this late entry into the process of defining the state makes the international community and its effects no less real. Just as individuals can join new communities which then come to influence them, the states system has evolved to such an extent that this international community has a large influence in the everyday life of the state. Unlike people, however, it is not always possible for the state to simply move away (physically, ideologically, or with regards to the level of interaction) from a community it does not wish to join.

II. Legitimacy

Legitimacy arising from the international community is what makes a state possible. Legitimacy, we will remember, is the notion that an entity ought to be. Therefore, a state's recognition as legitimate by the international community is the belief that the said state is, ought, and has a right to function as a state. These rights are understood as the concept of sovereignty: to be the highest power with the ability to make and enforce laws over its inviolable territories.

This definition comes with many caveats. One of the largest debates today is over the definition of legitimacy: China takes a very strict interpretation whereas many Western nations hold that sovereignty only applies when a state cares for its people. This is the exception that allows NATO to intervene in Kosovo and feel morally justified while at the same time other states feel just as just in declaring these actions wrong. This debate over what extent the "responsibility to protect" supersedes the right of sovereignty

has been reinvigorated by the Arab Spring and the revolution and partial intervention in Libya.

This political discourse over the definition of a state and its sovereignty has a tangible impact on what the state is. Just as the beliefs of the people are important in defining the state, the opinions of the international community also matter. Perhaps it is best to start with a less contentious example than Kosovo. Everyone agrees that Brazil is a sovereign state. In recognizing this authority, the international community (i.e. each and every other state) agrees to treat Brazil following certain accepted patterns. Brazil is authorized to purchase land for an embassy in other countries, its diplomats are extended immunity from prosecution, its home territory is not to be encroached upon, its merchant vessels are to be respected upon the high seas, fishermen from other states will not enter Brazil's exclusive economic zone in the ocean, and other states will respect their treaties with Brazil – to name just a few customs, rights, and responsibilities of a recognized state. However, these characteristics are not immutable. The exclusive economic zone of a state did not exist until the international community decided that it existed at the third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. And even this limited the role of sovereignty in this area to fit the legal regime established by the convention. It does not matter what each state individually feels is just, but rather, the collective defines the extent of the state. If Brazil was to lose recognition – even if nothing material was to change – then it would lose the right to the economic resources of these waters. No state would come to its aid, especially through official channels of resolution. There would be no normative protections guarding Brazil; that is, other states would not see it as wrong to

take advantage of Brazil's territorial waters or any other aspect of the state. Therefore, it is in Brazil's material interest to maintain its recognition as a state.

It is also in Brazil's social interest to maintain this recognition. Brazil, like every state, sees itself as pursuing the justice that its domestic constituency desires. External validation through recognition as a legitimate state can seem appealing insofar as Brazil sees the international community as setting a desirable standard, regardless of any economic or material advantages. Conversely, if Brazil sees the international community as inherently unjust, there will be no force beyond material calculation that would make it comply. This attraction to the ideals of the international community will be dealt with more thoroughly in the chapter on change. For now, the main points are understanding that the ontological category of "state" is by no means clear or consistent and that there are incentives to comply with the definition of a state imposed by the normative structure of the international community.

III. Physical Domination

For some states, the loss of legitimacy could spell death. Just as the presence of domestic legitimacy reduces the costs of maintaining order as the people want what the government wants, the presence of international legitimacy comes with certain guarantees which lower the cost of defense. Without this guarantee, the cost of maintaining security becomes impossible. This is evident recently in Libya, where the collapse of the Gaddafi regime was aided by the international community. The agreement to revoke the full recognition of sovereignty by the UN and the UN Security created a

space in which it was permissible for other states to take certain steps to prevent continued atrocities. Gaddafi did not have the material power to resist in the face of a loss of legitimacy, with a very clear impact on the existence of Gaddafi's Libya.

In other states, the loss of legitimacy would be less consequential. While Somalia is largely considered a failed state with an ineffective transitional council, there are two regions which have organized themselves into self-governing units: Somaliland and Puntland. Neither receives *de jure* recognition of legitimacy from the international community. Nevertheless, these entities have not suffered the same fate of Gaddafi's Libya despite even more meager resources. This lack of resources may be exactly what has prevented their collapse. There is no incentive to violate the *de facto* sovereignty because there is no benefit; they are simply ignored. Somaliland and Puntland exist outside of the states system, maintained only by domestic legitimacy and physical force.

On the opposite end of the spectrum there are states such as the United States which exist with sufficient physical power to deter any aggression regardless of legitimacy. However, working completely outside of the international community would be an unwise decision for all but the most absolute of hegemons. While it would be unreasonable to think that the US would be destroyed if it lost legitimacy, this does not mean that the US can completely ignore the conception of appropriate behavior for states. Indeed, US policies are actively shaped by this shared perception – particularly with the Arab Spring debate surrounding the responsibility to protect doctrine of defining state sovereignty. Were the US to do what it wanted without regard to this common notion of appropriateness and become seen by the international community as illegitimate, all the benefits of global communication and trade would begin to fade away as the US could

not physically force every country to comply with the US vision of the world if most other states were not in favor.

However, the US is able to force change in weak countries which deviate from a common norm. In 1954 the United States participated in a coup d'état against the Guatemalan President, Jacobo Árbenz. The CIA felt that Guatemala's policies were not respecting private property in a legitimate way and had to be stopped to preserve capitalism.²² This external action led to a change in the internal balance of power in Guatemala which led a new regime - a government with understandings of appropriate behavior more in line with the US. If Guatemala had been a small state which complied with the international orthodoxy, then no international action would have occurred.

These different combinations of force and legitimacy can be represented on a two by two matrix.

²² The system of distribution of economic resources in a fundamental topic in moral reasoning. Find citation.

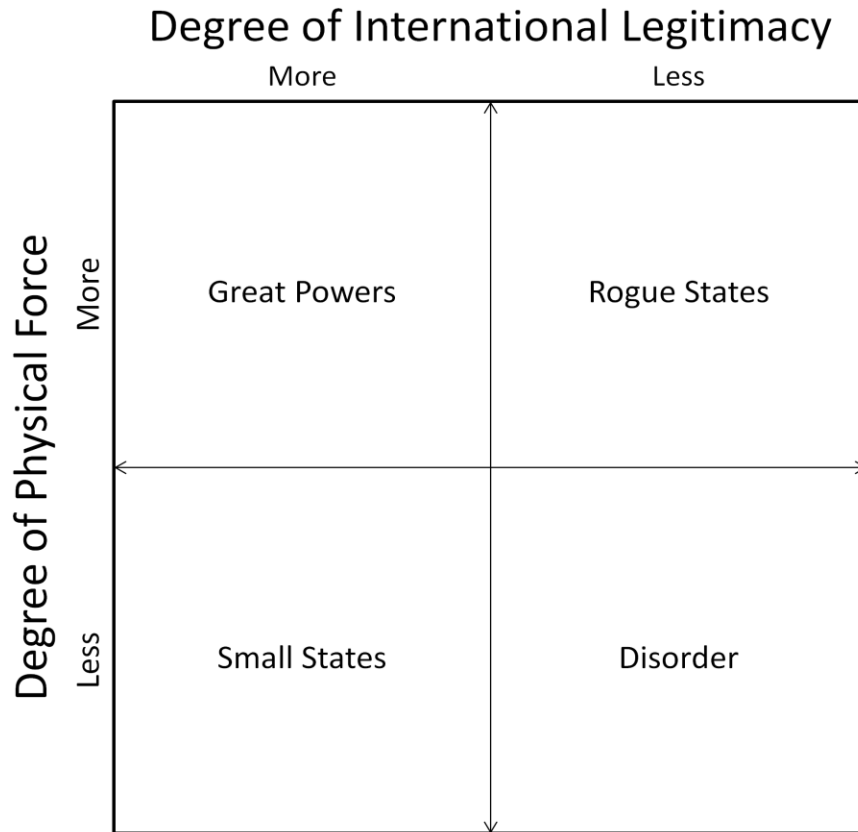


Table 2

States which are not recognized by the international community, yet which have sufficient deterrent force to stave off forced compliance, occupy the top right quadrant of this table. These rogue states are outside of the international community and are able to exist independently of the states structure. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a longstanding example of such a state. It only partially participate in the international system, yet its geopolitical position has permitted it to survive long enough to develop a large military despite international condemnation.

If North Korea lost this deterrent ability, it would descend into disorder (bottom right). The vulnerability that material weakness would create would allow for external pressures to influence the state. If the international community was not able to bring the

state back into compliance with the common vision of the good, then some sort of intervention, in proportion to how illegitimate the state has become, is likely. An extreme case of this is Iraq's invasion of Kuwait 1990. This unwilling annexation of a previously sovereign Kuwait was seen as unjust by the international community. International diplomacy was unable to bring Iraq back into the fold of international legitimacy, resulting in a counter-war and temporary disorder as the Kuwaiti government was reestablished and the rule of law restored.

The bottom and top left quadrants are separated only by the amount of force that the state is able to project. Great Powers have a much larger role in enforcing the international order through the use of force than the smaller states which lack sufficient physical power. These are the two types of states that make up the "usual" international order.

IV. Agent and Structure

These past two chapters have established the importance of both combinations of legitimacy & domination and agent & structure in defining the state. Legitimacy, driven by normative beliefs of what ought to be, can create or remove significant physical costs for action at the level of domestic society or the international community. These forces operate behind the scenes to create the reality that exists at any given moment. Understanding the structures and patterns of legitimacy can enable predictions about how

the world will change given certain exogenous shocks²³. By way of summary, two general conclusions are also possible.

The vision of the good which is ultimately adopted is based on perceptions of legitimacy and the physical force that backs it up. This applies to both domestic society and the international community. The presence of legitimacy is the deciding factor in how expensive or hard a change in justice would be – destroying legitimacy with force is a costly affair. A two by two matrix of the different types of legitimacy – both domestically and internationally – is provided below.

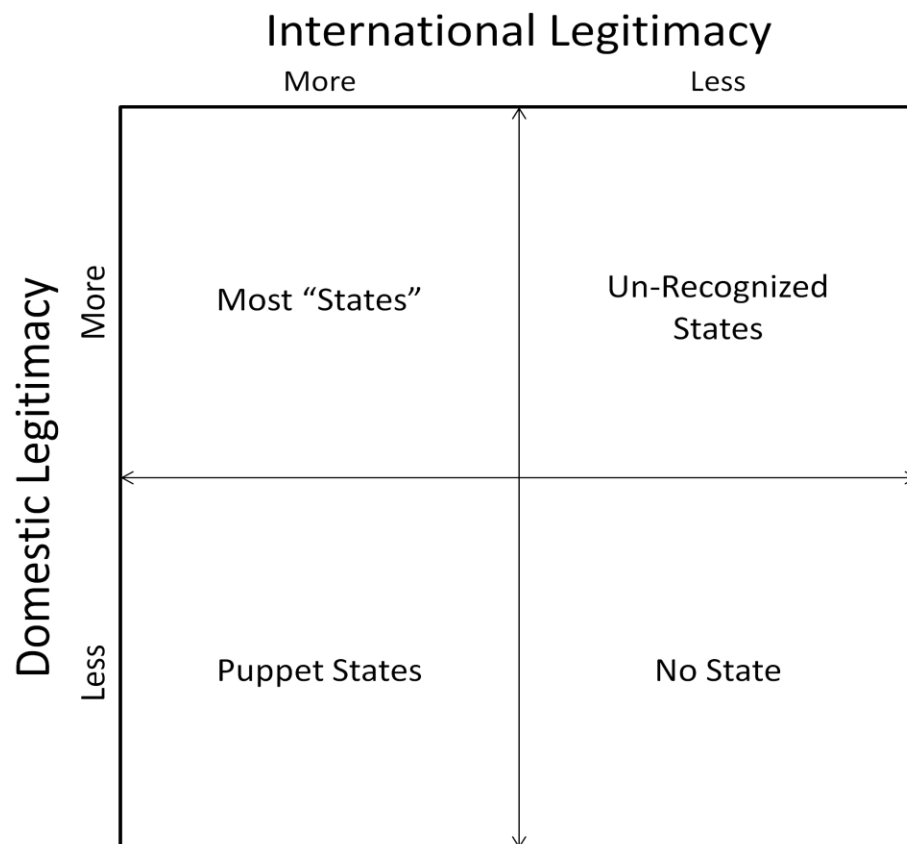


Table 3

²³ i.e. Given a state with domestic legitimacy but an international community that it disagrees with, the state must either adopt the international standard and risk losing domestic support or oppose the international community and risk being alienated. The outcome will be decided by a rational decision between the costs of each.

The top left quadrant is defined by the presence of both domestic and international legitimacy. These states tend to be fairly stable and typifies the international order. They are not prone to destruction from domestic revolt and they give no reason for international interference.

Moving to the right, the absence of international legitimacy despite the presence of domestic legitimacy will lead to a state seeking to change the international community or the international community seeking to change the state. These states, such as North Korea, perceive the existing international order as unjust while the international community views the state's conduct as unjust. Recurrent crises are the result.

In the bottom right, the presence of international legitimacy and absence of domestic legitimacy is a fairly rare occurrence as dictators will usually be able to reeducate their populations over a sufficient amount of time and given sufficient degree of domination over the populace. However, these states rely on the international community to be maintained. The state would not have sufficient levels of available resources to push back against outside influence, as their concentration must be on ensuring the cooperation of the domestic population. Lacking sufficient resources to counter outside influence, these states are at the mercy of other states who hold material power over them.²⁴

The final quadrant signifies the absence of both international and domestic legitimacy. This leaves a population in a state of chaos where all that matters is material power. As a result, these areas are often ruled by warlords or with intermediary

²⁴ This thesis assumes a singular international community as this is closest to what constitutes the current international system. In some instances, such as during the Cold War, there were multiple such communities. Puppet states would be at the mercy of whichever "sphere of influence" most dominated the area.

organizations which function as states but are not recognized internationally. The unfortunate fate which has befallen Somalia is a clear example of what happens when the social and material bonds that constitute a state have completely fallen away.

The state and its expression of its vision of the good is determined partly by domestic society and partially by the influence of the international community, working through the interaction of the forces of legitimacy and physical domination. Each state has a different vision of the good and international politics is the process of resolving these inconsistencies. The system of justice which is ultimately expressed in the international social order depends on states agreeing on legitimacy and physical power compliance with the views of the powerful. International politics is a struggle for justice as defined by each state's vision of the good.

Chapter Five: Mediums for Change

“Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.”

– Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi

Chapters two and three described how domestic society and the international community endow the state with a certain set of normative perceptions of justice known as visions of the good. These provide direction or purpose for the state when it makes calculations about what *should be* in the world. In trying to achieve these goals, the state will act in the most efficient manner that it knows how while operating within the limitations provided by the structure of legitimacy and physical domination in which it finds itself. In the everyday process of *being*, however, the communities which constitute a state may very well undergo a process of evolution in their understandings of justice. Certain situations may challenge them to rethink their usual responses or new ideologies may be developed. Predicting this kind of change is difficult, but we can understand relative changes between groups as being based on the social relationships which they construct. In addition, less influential groups may also undergo a form of identity change which causes them to seek to express their views more forcefully, upsetting the previous balance. One of the methods for change in international politics, then, is change in identity.

Because of the application of physical domination, however, the expressed identity of a state can be much different than the unexpressed or latent state identity inherent in any suppressed groups. This latent identity can be present at either the domestic or international levels and can quickly become relevant should the balance of

physical force shift and allow for a different group to gain control of the state. Material changes must also be recognized as important mediums to change.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first shows the means by which identity shifts over time and the second examines the impact of material changes on which vision of the good is expressed.

I. Change in Identity

The way in which identity changes is rarely straightforward, but it can be examined through the effect on legitimacy. In *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Joseph S. Nye, Jr. lays out his description of soft power. In contrast to hard power, Nye defines soft power as cooption rather than coercion: “soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others”²⁵. The concept of soft power relies upon a dynamic understanding of interests; soft power only applies over time as one country causes a transformation of the perception of interest in another country in order to bring them into better alignment with the interests of the first. “Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others”²⁶.

This power originates “with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority”.²⁷ As part of this, a “country [which] suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose not only its hard-power resources but also some of its

²⁵ Page 5

²⁶ Page 5

²⁷ Page 6

attractiveness”.²⁸ Assets fall into three categories: culture (“in places where it is attractive to others”), political values (“[when they are lived] up to at home and abroad”), and foreign policy (“when [the policies] are seen as legitimate and having moral authority”).²⁹ Culture creates attraction through reinforcing values and policies that others also value, and this appreciation is spread to other values that may not be completely shared. This happens through Hollywood films, commerce, and personal contact via tourism and study exchange programs. Political values are the second category as the government’s stance on values and policies also matters. However, inconsistencies between what a government says and does can harm it, just as racial segregation in the 1950s harmed American influence in Africa. The third category is foreign policy. The Iraq War of 2003 was very unpopular internationally, leading the government to squander soft power that had been earned by society. The policies that governments promote internationally substantially affect others’ views of the nation.

Nye goes on to specify that the context of soft power matters too: debaucherous Hollywood films may be attractive to South American or Chinese consumers, but would be seen as a negative in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. Indeed, the government does not control soft power; a large portion comes from society at large as it creates a “general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action”.³⁰

Joseph Nye’s conception of soft power is based upon the same social forces that help to construct the state. However, Nye has a much-too-narrow and ill-defined view of these forces. He fails to recognize the full importance and potency of legitimacy. The phenomenon which soft power describes is that of how nations’ views on what is

²⁸ Page 9

²⁹ Page 11

³⁰ Page 16

appropriate action change over time through the influence of other nation-states. That is to say that the concept of soft power takes advantage of the same underlying properties that the concept of visions of the good seeks to explain. However, soft power muddles this task by having insufficient theorizing on the role of legitimacy in dictating these views of appropriate action. Nye concentrates simply on power – the means to induce change – rather than identifying the sources and mechanisms behind states' perceptions of interest.

Nye's account of the origin and sources of soft power is the most problematic part of his theory. Culture, political values, and foreign policies are the three mechanisms through which soft power is transmitted. What these three general categories all have in common is their relationship with legitimacy. Culture as expressed in terms of popular culture through films, business interactions, and exchange programs is a means to sharing values about what is good, appropriate, and constitutes legitimate action. Films portray life as it exists in a country, with all of its types of interaction – from business, to government, and even love. Business interactions express preconceived notions about the proper way contract disputes are settled. Exchange programs do all of this through immersion in the actual societies in question, rather than through representations therein. Culture is the expression of visions of the good. The same is true of political values, almost necessarily so. If the United States believes that human rights are universal, it would see any violation of human rights as inappropriate actions. For foreign policy, Nye says that the policies must have legitimacy and be seen as having moral authority. Even lacking a description of what legitimacy means in this instance, it is clear that Nye sees soft power as arising from agreement with the appropriateness of foreign policies. If the

origin of soft power is in legitimacy, then the Weberian framework of *visions of the good* may be applied more broadly.

Second, Nye fails is in locating the proper actors that control legitimacy and in specifying the various possibilities that different structural arrangements can take. He has paved the way for the acceptance of soft power as a phenomenon, but has failed to capitalize on the power of its theoretical implications. Nye's account of cultural interaction looks at the level of domestic society. He has individuals studying abroad, conducting business deals, and creating movies. Political values would seem to imply forms of government that the people accept from the state level, and foreign policy falls into the realm of the state. However, Nye has no explicit mention of levels of agency other than to say that both people and the state are important. From the actor-structure duality described in previous chapters which creates the state, only international society has not been mentioned. Can international society have soft power? Through bodies like the United Nations – but also through more informal and uninstitutionalized networks – what is seen as the legitimate will of the international community may be expressed. Instead of creating an attraction to a specific country, the international community is capable of sustaining and expressing legitimacy. Indeed, this is the very phenomenon by which the international community helps to form states in the first place!

As soft power is a function of legitimacy, it may better be understood as arising from the same three Weberian sources that have been used throughout this thesis: tradition, charisma, and functional legitimacy. Rather than being a general influence, this approach will allow an examination of context specific issue areas, rather than reducing

the phenomenon of legitimacy to a “general influence”³¹. Indeed, there are many instances in which a general influence is of no use whatsoever. The Maldives (both the people and government) may view global climate change as a severe injustice that is treading on the rights of their nation, and no amount of appreciation of American film could possibly change this. Nye capitulates by saying that soft power is context based, but this misses an important aspect of *why* this is the case. This is not an issue of one country being “mean” to another, but rather differing understandings of what constitutes property rights. The United States has a long tradition and understanding of property rights in a very individualistic setting with it remaining appropriate and acceptable for corporations to use the commons – such as the air or sea – without any necessary payments. In this case, the United State’s approach to what is acceptable rests on legitimacy from tradition. Change must therefore come from the problem-solving impetus of functional legitimacy or charismatic legitimacy. There is an individual understanding of appropriate relations which separates the Maldives from the United States – not any general feeling of amiability. This means that culture is only as powerful as its ability to influence legitimacy. As Nye recognized, a successful military and economy are symbols of prestige and grant the owner a form of legitimacy – coming from functional legitimacy. So a nation which has these material things will have claim to better business practices that others should mimic. Others don’t see the business practices and then conclude that the US should be copied, rather, they look at the results and attempt to follow the causes of that success.

Soft power is a useful tool for understanding how identity changes. However, we must move beyond Nye’s account and apply the concept in a more rigorous way with the

³¹ Page 16 in *Soft Power* by Joseph Nye.

full knowledge that the ultimate source of soft power is legitimacy: the belief that something *ought* to be. The agents which help to constitute the state are necessarily endowed with legitimacy as the means to creating the state. This legitimacy can be applied towards other entities – other actors, states, or the international community, and it can take the form of appeals to tradition, charisma, or efficient function. The same can be said of the state and its ability to promote a certain view of what should be, trying to convince other states, actors, and the international community to go along with it. Lastly, the international community can use the same legitimacy that it can bestow upon states to help alter what those states believe should be.

Individuals are the source of all agency, and therefore they have a direct ability to change the structure of legitimacy. Even in dictatorships, the regime does not govern solely based on their physical power to dominate, but rather has some degree of legitimacy as well. Because the regime must work to maintain this legitimacy, a change in domestic society's perception of justice will force the state to change its vision of the good or crackdown using limited material resources. Sometimes both a change in state identity and a crackdown occur simultaneously. In the United States' Civil Rights Movement, existing regulations were upheld with an oftentimes brutal use of force even as these laws were being amended to fit the changing notion of justice. Within the Civil Rights Movement there were many overlapping communities and individuals leading the cause. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is perhaps the most famous of these. His actions made other individuals and groups (especially religious communities) believe in and support the cause. King became a legitimate authority and used his soft power to argue for change within the nation.

Another form of non-national association which can be endowed with legitimacy is the transnational community. Religious groups, scientific communities, and other imagined communities which cross national borders can use soft power. In Communist Poland, the Catholic Church operated as an “alternative to an unpopular regime.”³² When Pope John Paul II traveled to Poland in 1979 huge crowds greeted him at every turn. His messages would influence the Polish trade union, Solidarity, which would turn into one of the main political oppositions to the Communist regime soon after its founding in 1980. Lech Wałęsa, the main leader of the trade union and a devout Catholic, accepted this close association and found encouragement in the Pope’s words. Indeed, “the very existence of a Polish Pope” had “profoundly changed the emotional atmosphere in Poland.”³³

States can also use soft power. At the close of the Second World War the United States was seen by many to be a state worthy of emulation, especially with regards to trade policy. The US was the dominant economic power; it must know the secrets to progress!³⁴ This legitimacy to construct trade policy permitted the development of the Bretton Woods Institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Not everyone was happy with the changes, but the US had the legitimacy to argue that this was the way the international economic order should be structured. According to Gideon Rachman at the Financial Times, “one senior official at the Bank of England described the deal reached at Bretton Woods as “the greatest blow to Britain next to the war”, largely because it underlined the way in which financial power had moved from the

³² Desmond O’Grady, writing for The Sydney Morning Herald on Wednesday October 18th, 1978.

³³ Gwynne Dyver, writing for The Montreal Gazette on Thursday, May 31st, 1979.

³⁴ The operation of functional legitimacy is clearly in play here.

UK to the US.”³⁵ It wasn’t that the US had the ability to buy out England’s system, but that the US was seen as having a justified vision of the good for shaping international financial institutions.

The international community can also be a source of soft power. Just as the international community can bestow legitimacy upon states, it can use its position of authority to encourage orthodoxy from states and individuals. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, pronouncements by the General Assembly, statements by regional bodies, and even similar press releases by many nations at the same time all serve to show the will of the international community. Insofar as individuals and states think that these groups are legitimate, then the normative beliefs of the international community will excerpt the pull of soft power. This effect is seen all of the time; when the UN General Assembly passes a resolution, even countries which were vehemently opposed to it do not generally reject the resolution’s policies as illegitimate.

II. Change in Physical Domination

In addition to changes in desires and perceptions of legitimacy, transformations can also take place in the allocation of physical domination. The three levels of individual agents and their communities, states, and the international community again come into play. Each of these can lose or gain influence based on changes to the distribution of physical capabilities. These capabilities can be as diverse as monetary resources,

³⁵ Gideon, Rachman. "The Bretton Woods Sequel will Flop." *Financial Times*, November 11, 2009.

weapons of war, strategic advantages over others, or even the possible future production of such resources.

A rise in the physical power of the people would be analogous to a relative decline in the physical power of the state. In a state which lacks legitimacy, this would force the government to acquiesce to some of the demands on the people. The more material capabilities that the people control the more their vision of the good will be expressed by the state. This effect would be even more direct in states whose legitimacy was based on accurately expressing the vision of the good of the people, as in democracies. However, if the views of the people were more dissimilar to the international community than the government's old views, this could result in some sort of conflict. The state would be perceived internationally as moving towards a rogue status, and the government would have no choice in the matter, as going against a strengthened people could result in their internal downfall. Depending on the ability of the state to defend itself, this could result in its ostracization from the international community or even a conflict should the perceived injustices created by the differences in visions of the good be sufficiently large.

A relative decrease in the material power of the people would decrease their influence on the state's vision of the good. If the state lacked domestic legitimacy, this would give the regime in power a much stronger control over the vision of the good. If the state had domestic legitimacy, then there should not be a change in which vision of the good is expressed. For example, the US military grew relatively stronger following World War II in comparison with the domestic population, yet the vision of the good that was expressed did not change as the state was already legitimate.

Changes in material power at the level of the state result in different amounts of influence on the international order. Holding legitimacy constant, an increase in state power will give it more opportunity to force compliance with its vision of the good. As the Soviet Union collapsed, so did its military-industrial complex and its economy. This decline reduced the amount of physical force that Russia, the successor state, was able to project – regardless of changes in the state’s vision of the good.

If the ability of the international community to force compliance with the orthodox vision of the good declines sufficiently, then the international community risks being torn into pieces. Given a static level of legitimacy, a lack of the ability to project force risks allowing the presence of rogue states. If that revisionist state were sufficiently powerful, there could be multiple international communities competing for influence. Indeed, this system most accurately describes the Cold War. Each community or “block” of countries operated as the international community, helping to define the participating states. Just as a lack of legitimacy in the state and a lack of physical domination to keep it together results in the splitting of the state into its lowest common denominators of legitimacy and material coercion, the international system can be split into competing communities in the presence of insufficient force and legitimacy.

When individuals, society, the state, and the international community compete over which vision of the good is expressed, two factors determine the outcome. Legitimacy influences the content of the system of justice while physical domination controls who gets the chance to participate in the negotiations. Legitimacy is the basis for attraction which underlies the idea of soft power. Shaping others’ identity through

making them want what you want is one of the mechanisms of change, while transformations in the distribution of physical capacity is the second.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

“I look forward to a future in which our country will match its military strength with our moral restraint, its wealth with our wisdom, its power with our purpose. . . . And I look forward to an America which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength but for its civilization as well.”

– President John F. Kennedy³⁶

International politics is the struggle for justice in pursuit of differing visions of the good. Each state has a unique understanding of just conduct and what *ought* to be to which they try and mold the international social order. The vision of the good that the state ultimately encourages is determined by individuals’ and the international community’s perceptions of legitimacy and the balance of material forces. Change to the international order can come from changing identities or physical capabilities at the level of the individual or society, the state, or the international community.

Our perceptions of what is just and unjust, of what ought to be and ought not to be, and of what is legitimate and illegitimate have a profound impact on the world. Much theorizing in international relations fails to acknowledge the power of these normative thoughts and is all the weaker for it. The concept of soft power as coined by Joseph Nye is a useful tool in understanding changes in preferences. However, by recognizing that soft power extends beyond simply affinity to the common perceptions of what is legitimate, we may better understand and interpret how and when it is possible to “make them want what you want.”

The usual definition of the state as having “a monopoly on the legitimate use of force” is too simplistic and, when implemented, is often self-contradictory. The term

³⁶ Kennedy, John F. "Remarks at Amherst College." October 26, 1963. May 11, 2012.
<http://www.arts.gov/about/Kennedy.html>.

“legitimate” implies that there is some common agreement that the state ought to exist, yet some political scientists like Alexander Wendt assume that force is always and everywhere sufficient to create that legitimacy. It is not. Headway into a more powerful social theory of the international system must recognize the state as the social entity that it is.

The ontology that is constructed in this thesis does not reject the influence of material power. Even the claim that states rationally pursue their given ends is maintained from more materialist theories. The physical allocation of resources is a critical limitation on action and its importance must be recognized and accepted by social theories of the international system. Without some acknowledgement of material limitations placed upon societies, it is impossible to truly describe the world in which humans operate. Purely materialist theories cannot work in isolation, either. Without social reasoning, it becomes impossible to soundly draw any claims of how the world should be.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the President of France, has declared that the nation will not apologize for any atrocities committed in the French occupation of Algeria. “I’m for a recognition of the facts, but not for repentance, which is a religious notion that has no place in relations between states.”³⁷ Sarkozy is not alone in rejecting the role of moral reasoning in international politics. However, by refusing to talk about how states should interact, it becomes impossible for the visions of the good of France and Algeria to be resolved in mutual understanding. If past actions cannot be publicly recognized as wrong, then there can be no way to prevent them from happening again.

President Clinton recognized that he was wrong not to support an intervention in Rwanda during the genocide. He flew to the Rwandan capital of Kigali and apologized

³⁷ As quoted by Karl E. Meyer in the Foreign Policy article “The Politics of Sorry” on March 12, 2012.

for the inaction of the international community. In simply recognizing that a past action was wrong, he strengthened the claim that genocide is unacceptable in the modern world. It is impossible to recognize the good intentions of the responsibility to protect doctrine without acknowledging that past failures to uphold this vision of the good were improper.

As different ideals of the international order come into conflict, it becomes ever more important to understand the origins of each nation's vision of the good. Each state believes that it is doing justice in the world; other's views cannot simply be dismissed as the work of self-interested and evil actors. To make such assumptions risks demonizing the other and compromising their rights by treating them without respect – as less than human or as less than a state. If the other is evil then we assume that they do not deserve to be treated with the rights due to all, even within our own definition of justice and order! By recognizing that there are multiple visions of the good we enable ourselves to acknowledge their presence and reason through our differences in peace instead of in war. International politics is the struggle for justice in pursuit of differing visions of the good and we must not be afraid to discuss what the proper international order *should* be.

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